

AN
ASSIZE SERMON,
PREACHED AT THE
CATHEDRAL CHURCH
OF
CHESTER,

BEFORE THE
HON. *RICHARD PEPPER ARDEN*, Esq.
CHIEF JUSTICE OF *CHESTER*, AND HIS MAJESTY'S
ATTORNEY GENERAL,

AND THE
HON. *DAINES BARRINGTON*, Esq.
THE SECOND JUSTICE OF *CHESTER*,

On TUESDAY, APRIL 20, 1784.

By THE REV. *GEORGE VANBRUGH*, L. L. B.
CHAPLAIN TO HIS MAJESTY'S 40th. REGIMENT.

C H E S T E R:
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MDCCLXXXIV.

AN

ASSIZE SERMON

CATHEDRAL CHURCH



WILLIAM RICHARD PERKINS ARDMAN ESQ
CHIEF JUSTICE OF THE PEACE AND HIS MAJESTY'S
ATTORNEY GENERAL

HENRY DAINES BARRINGTON ESQ

SECOND JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

BY THE REV. GEORGE VALENTINE L.L.B.

C. H. E. F. M.

RECORDED

T O

THOMAS WILLIS, OF SWETTENHAM, ESQ,
HIGH SHERIFF OF THE COUNTY PALATINE OF *CHESTER*,

THIS

S E R M O N,

PUBLISHED AT HIS PARTICULAR REQUEST,
IS INSCRIBED,
WITH THE SINCEREST GRATITUDE AND RESPECT,

BY HIS MOST OBLIGED,

AND MOST OBEDIENT,

HUMBLE SERVANT,

GEO. VANBRUGH.



THOMAS W. SWETNAM, JR.
HIGH SHERIFF OF THE COUNTY OF CUMBERLAND

2 JUL 1867

Received of the Hon. Secy of the Interior
the sum of \$100.00

IN RECEIPT

of the sum of \$100.00 paid to the
Hon. Secy of the Interior

BY HONORABLE

THOMAS W. SWETNAM, JR.

High Sheriff of the County of Cumberland

for the sum of \$100.00

PAID TO THE HON. SECY OF THE INTERIOR

FOR THE SUM OF \$100.00

THE HON. SECY OF THE INTERIOR

FOR THE SUM OF \$100.00

ST. MATTHEW, viith. CHAP. 12th. VER.

THEREFORE ALL THINGS, WHATSOEVER YE WOULD THAT MEN SHOULD DO TO YOU, DO YE EVEN SO TO THEM: FOR THIS IS THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS.

OUR blessed Redeemer in this chapter concludes his divine sermon on the mount, and gives his hearers a recapitulation of the several parts of it, in such a concise and summary manner, as might most easily make the whole sink deep into their minds, and by that means be of most service to its original design.

SOME writers have supposed there is not a connection between the words of the text and those which went before; and the word "therefore" is not thought to have its full force in this place; but only to denote a sudden transition from one subject to another. But whether we understand them as having a manifest relation to the words which went before, in this or the preceding chapter, or by themselves

themselves independently, it is immaterial in the present case, as we may understand them to be of universal obligation: and we may find in them that great rule of equity, — that rule which is most beneficial to the welfare and happiness of society, enforced upon us in the most engaging manner, and upon the most rational motives.

UNDER the words of the text are comprehended all the branches of justice and charity: and we are only referred to ourselves, to search into our own hearts, whether in such particular circumstances, we would desire our neighbour should so behave to us, as we have the opportunity of behaving to him? Whether we would, at any time or upon any occasion, desire him not to do us an injury, or that he would do us a kindness, every circumstance between him and ourselves being impartially considered?

FIRST, I purpose to consider the meaning of this rule of equity.

SECONDLY, under what restrictions it is sometimes to be limited: for we shall find, in order to be a rule of equity, properly so called, it must necessarily be under some certain restrictions.

LASTLY, I shall endeavour to shew the excellence and usefulness of it; under the former of which, I shall have regard to the further recommendation given to it by our Saviour, when he declares it to be "the law and the prophets."



We have all of us, it must be allowed, a desire of happiness and an aversion to misery implanted within us: at least, it will be granted, that pleasure and pain are the first sensations excited in or impressed upon us. Self-love of itself, therefore, will make us by all possible means pursue the one and avoid the other. We cannot but observe further, that the same desires and aversions, we find in ourselves, are common to the rest of mankind. The generality of these impressions, therefore, and the necessity we are all under of entering into society, and that also from our incapacity to defend and support ourselves, are together an undeniable argument for the establishment of this rule of equity, "that in all things, whatsoever we would that men should do to us, we should do even so to them."

In another place * our Saviour commands us to love our neighbour as ourselves. It may seem impossible, we should love another with the same degree of affection we do ourselves; as self-preservation is not improperly called the first law of nature.

BUT this objection will be easily removed, if we understand the words of our Redeemer in this place, in the same sense as those of the text: which only imply, we are to behave ourselves to our neighbour, or fellow-creature, as (every circumstance on both sides impartially considered) we would desire he should behave to us, were we in his situation, and he in ours.

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* St. Matt. xix. 19.

BUT

BUT the consideration of the second particular,—under what restrictions this rule of equity is sometimes to be limited, will yet more fully explain the true meaning of the text.

It may, on a superficial view, seem improper to say, it is to be limited in any respect, especially when it has been before said to be of universal obligation: and, our Saviour expressly directs us, “in all things,” we are to have regard to it in our behaviour to others.

BUT there are evidently many cases, in which we should be greatly misled in our reference to self-love, or, in other words, to ourselves only in our behaviour. The love we have for ourselves is seldom untainted with passion or prejudice: and, if we were to consider only what we should desire in any particular case, we should not always avoid, if not the actual commission of sin, at least the imputation of having given to others our countenance or assistance in it.

FOR instance, if the Judge should divest himself of his authority, and pardon the fierce felon, whose depredations on the human peace almost forbid compassion, (if man can possibly fall to so low and depraved a state as not to claim compassion)—should the Judge pardon him, merely from the consideration of what he himself would wish from him, was he in his situation: by so doing, he would himself be guilty of an high offence against his duty; he would
hurt

hurt society in the tenderest part, and might certainly be said to
"bear the sword in vain." *

So likewise, a person under the dominion of sin, under the power of evil habits, is continually endeavouring to find out occasions to gratify his violent propensity: and were we in the same unhappy situation, we should doubtless, in many cases, desire and wish the same: and yet, on that account, to countenance or administer to vice, would certainly be to commit sin ourselves, or, at least, to be partakers of it.

To remove these, and many other such difficulties, we must necessarily understand the words of the text, "in all things," with this restriction, — not as including all things whatsoever, in general, in the strict sense of the words; but all things, which our duty to God, our neighbour, and ourselves, impartially and properly considered on both sides, will permit us to do.

AND this, in short, is what we are bound to have regard to in the case of our neighbour on every occasion. Neither can this explanation in any respect be termed confined or partial, when we are commanded by our most holy Religion, in our behaviour to our neighbour on all occasions, to have especial regard, not only to what is strict justice, but we are to allow yet considerably more to the delightful and amiable purposes of charity.

* Rom. xiii. 4.

THE necessity of this restriction of the words of the text, will likewise further appear, if we consider, that, as we are all equally liable to the displeasure of God for any wilful disregard to our duty; so in like manner, self-love itself, to which we are referred by our Saviour, for the regard we are to have to our neighbour, suggests to us, that were we in the extremity of situation he is under, whatever it be, we should not desire any assistance or support from him, which might oblige him to act against his duty, or even endanger his regard to it. So that, in all things, we need only ask ourselves, what our duty will permit us to do, and what to expect ourselves under the same circumstances, and we may safely refer ourselves to self-love for a proper answer, since all passion and prejudice will be entirely excluded from determining in any respect for us in the case.

So that, upon the whole, this regard to what our duty will permit us to do, which, at first, appeared to be some restriction upon the words of the text, will, in the end seem not such in any respect; but, on the contrary, absolutely necessary to their right explanation; and, without which, this rule of equity itself can never be properly established.

I shall now proceed, lastly, to endeavour to shew the usefulness and excellence of this precept of our Saviour: "whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them:" and the excellence more especially, from his recommendation of it, "as it is the law and the prophets." To

To instance in every particular, what may regard the usefulness of this rule of equity, the present occasion will not admit, — neither indeed is it possible. It will be sufficient to observe — that without this most useful rule, so powerfully enforced as it is on the mind of every person by that principle we call *Conscience*, — we should find but a feeble assistant for the security of life or property from justice alone; blessed as we are with the wisest administration of it in this kingdom. Artifice and cunning, might put on many more disguises, than they now appear under, but for this principle of conscience; which, more or less, in proportion to its powerful influence, makes the proper and just distinction between the barbarous and civilized part of mankind. In how many more instances, than those too often to be met with, might innocence be oppressed, might weakness of understanding be taken advantage of to the worst purposes, and even the professed libertine, the unjust, and the oppressor, not only escape unseen, but perhaps defy all human justice! Of what little avail would be all the wise policy of government, — the very utmost exertion of human wisdom in the promulgation and establishment of laws, without this principle of conscience existing in the mind of man!

THE excellence of this duty is sufficiently apparent from the usefulness of it; but our blessed Redeemer enforces it yet further, as “it is the law and the prophets:” or in other words, it is the sum of what was intended in the law of the second table given to Moses by God himself, and of all those precepts, which were at several
times

times given by the prophets, either as smaller branches of the law of Moses, or as explanations only of particular parts of it. For how can the respect due to our parents and superiors;—how can the life and property of others;—how can the inviolable regard due to the marriage bed, and the innocence of others; or, lastly, that which we owe to our integrity, when we make a solemn appeal to God before a Magistrate—how can all these be better secured, than by this precept of our Saviour, “whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” From this, as from their common source, all the laws of the second table were originally derived, and into this they may be ultimately resolved. This, if rightly observed, would more fully obtain every end of human laws, than all the wisdom and strength with which they can be promulgated and enforced. *“He that loveth another,”* says St. Paul, *“hath fulfilled the law. For this thou shalt not commit adultery; thou shalt not kill; thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness; thou shalt not covet: and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”* *

WHAT regard the prophets have had to the precept of the text, appears from several parts of the old Testament: and most particularly from those solemn words of the prophet Micah, which ought to

* Rom. xiii. 8, 9, 10.

to be in our minds throughout the whole of our lives, and continually to direct our conduct: "*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*"*

To conclude. Let our Saviour's most amiable precept of equity, of love unfeigned, of universal charity, be constantly in our minds. Let all of us ever remember we are the children of the same common Parent, who ever consults the good of his creatures, and "*his tender mercies are over all his works:*"† that he has permitted us to labour under a variety of infirmities in this world, and no less a variety in degree of understanding and ability, to alleviate these troubles of our nature and the afflictions of life, one for another, as our several occasions may require: and that self-love and social ought to be in the minds of all of us inseparable.

For what purpose did our Creator place us amidst human society, but that we might cultivate humanity, and all of us in our several situations contribute to the general felicity? The good we may be able to do, in our sphere of life, whether great or small, will be sweet to us in our passage through this mortal state. How great happiness would arise from our becoming *universally* humane and charitable,—attentive to the advantages and inclinations,—the hopes and fears,—the wants and sorrows of one another! We should

* Micah, vi. 8.

† Psal. cxlv. 9.

should then experience * the happy influence the prophet Ifaiah so beautifully describes of some more advanced period of the Messiah's reign, as diffusing peace and felicity over all nature; when true religion shall universally prevail, and the native tendency of the Gospel of Jesus Christ attain its entire effect. *"The wolf shall dwell
 "with the lamb, and the leopard lie down with the kid; and the calf
 "and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall
 "lead them. The lion shall eat straw like the ox; and the sucking
 "child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put
 "his hand on the cockatrice den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all
 "my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of
 "the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."* †

BUT this peaceful and happy period is not yet arrived. How long the forbearance of God will permit the depravity of mankind to delay its coming, — how long he will suffer the lawless and disobedient to prevail, cannot by us be determined. In the mean time, to prevent the world from running into confusion, — to restrain those who would invade the rights of society, in every wise state, laws have been established. By these, mankind are united, the peace of society is secured, and mutual confidence is diffused through civil life. And as, in all good governments, laws are derived from the
 invariable

* See Dr. Blair's very excellent discourse on the Importance of Religious Knowledge to Mankind. Vol. II. Sermon. 15.

† Ifaiah xi. 6, 7, 8, 9.

invariable principles of religion and virtue, they are ultimately resolvable into the will of God; and consequently, do most justly demand our implicit and ready obedience. Let, therefore, a deep and awful sense of our duty to God, and a constant and grateful remembrance of those felicities we enjoy under our most excellent constitution, determine us to support the majesty of religion, and reverence the laws of our country; let these incline us to unanimity, to peace, and to concord; that our land may, in some degree, become like that future kingdom of everlasting peace and joy, where our imperfect, but earnest endeavours after virtue, during our term of probation in this mortal state, will, through the merits of our ever blessed Redeemer, be returned to us "*seven-fold into our bosoms.*"

THE END.



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THE END

